

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung  
Center for European Integration Studies  
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

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**European Integration:  
Challenge and Response**  
Crises as Engines of Progress  
in European Integration History

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His recent publications include: Europäische Union und föderale Idee, Munich 1993; Revolutionszeiten. Das Umbruchjahr 1989 im geschichtlichen Zusammenhang, Munich 1994 (Turkish edition 2003); Von der ewigen Suche nach Frieden. Immanuel Kants Vision und Europas Wirklichkeit, Bonn 1996; Beyond divisions and after. Essays on democracy, the Germans and Europe, New York/Frankfurt a.M. 1996; (with Hans-Gert Pöttering) Kontinent Europa, Zurich 1998 (Czech edition 2000); Zukunftsdenker. Bewährte Ideen politischer Ordnung für das dritte Jahrtausend, Baden-Baden 1999; Von Deutschland nach Europa. Geistiger Zusammenhalt und außenpolitischer Kontext, Baden-Baden 2000; Constituting Europe. Identity, Institution-Building and the Search for a Global Role, Baden-Baden 2003; Erweiterung und Vertiefung. Die Europäische Union im Neubeginn, Baden-Baden 2005.

*Ludger Kühnhardt*

## **European Integration: Challenge and Response**

### Crises as Engines of Progress in European Integration History

#### *I.*

Given all aspects and developments of its current path, the European Union seems to discover its opportunities and encounters its global challenges in a way that reminds me of the work of Henry the Navigator in the 15<sup>th</sup> century: He sailed around Cape Bojador with hesitance, limited knowledge and caution, without clear goals and yet with curiosity to learn what might lie behind the Cape. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Europe brought about the first wave of globalization. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems to be the other way around: Globalization seems to slowly bring about a new rationale for European integration as it forces the EU to learn faster, to look further and to come together more convincingly.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, seems to happen only through the medium of crises and the rhetoric of failure. Not only the EU's foreign policy, as Jan Zielonka has so aptly shown with one of his fine publications, is full of paradoxes.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, most of European integration is driven by the dialectics of paradox

1 See Ludger Kühnhardt, *Implications of Globalization on the Raison d'Etre of European Integration*, Oslo: ARENA, 2002.

2 Jan Zielonka (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, The Hague: Kluwer, 1998.

and crisis. The criteria to measure the degree of a crisis can only be found in the declared political objectives of the EU leadership as expressed in the subsequent series of treaties, in legislation and legal review by the European Court of Justice as well as in the declaratory ambitions related to EU Summitry and statements by the European Parliament. As for a concise definition of “crisis”, it seems appropriate to distinguish between “crisis of integration” and “crisis in integration”: While the first type of crisis is of a principal nature and challenges the very existence or at least the rationale of integration, the second type of crisis is related to difficulties in implementing certain policy objectives or goals without implying that the failure in achieving any of these objectives could derail the integration process as such or unravel its rationale and legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> While I cannot contribute to a scientific model of how the European Union will react to presumptive future crises, and while I will not deny the overstretch of crisis talk in media and academia - which seems mostly to be related to gaps between (subjective and objective) integration expectations and (subjective and objective) implementation failure – I suggest to add the notion of crises as engines of integration to our consensual list of lessons learned when studying European integration.<sup>4</sup>

My argument is divided into four parts. Firstly, I will introduce crisis as an engine of progress in European integration history and the concept of challenge and response as an explicatory variable. Secondly, I will offer some thoughts about a possible periodization of European integration history as far as the role and effect of the most defining crises and opportunities of

3 I am grateful to Timothy Garton Ash for this suggestion to better clarify the underlying assumptions of my study.

4 Some other lessons are already widespread, obvious and increasingly consensual: a) The relationship between “integration” and “European identity” has never been static during the past five decades as some of those tend to suggest who are afraid of an EU that would be enlarged to the Balkans and to Turkey.; b) The relationship between “deepening” and “widening” has always turned out to be mutually reinforcing and not, as is sometimes suggested in the scholarly literature, mutually exclusive; c) Finally, the debate about “supranationality” and “intergovernmentalism” has lost its fertility since the concept of multi-level governance in an unfinished federation of nation-states and Union citizens has been recognized as a new category of academic reasoning about the nature of the EU.

integration are concerned. Thirdly, I will allude to some more examples of crises in integration pertinent to the comprehensive nature of my argument. Finally, I will briefly look into the interconnectedness between European integration crises and adaptation periods in transatlantic relations.

When we reflect about the enabling forces of progress in European integration, we do it with a mixed bag of hope and fear, prejudice and competence. Some might think the answer is as easy as the squaring of a circle. But even then: Who moves the circle, and how does the squaring come about? As we know, it is only frogs that jump. All the rest of us, the European Union including, merely move, if at all. More than once, and sometimes very surprisingly, new dynamics in European integration has originated in dialectical processes, guided by the powerful and ironic law of unintended consequences.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes progress in European integration was the result of trial and error. More often, it came about not in spite, but because of crises. It seems to me that we could make more use of the classical concept of challenge and response - introduced by Arnold Toynbee in his seminal work on world history – in order to better understand and rationalize the often unimaginable and irrational, uninspiring or dubious, yet all in all highly successful course of European integration.

The natural oscillation of European integration between failure and success, or between challenge and response, represents what Toynbee called – in a completely different context - the “alternating rhythm of static and dynamic, of movement and pause and movement fundamental to the nature of the universe”<sup>6</sup>. With a view on world history, Toynbee explained with great erudition that challenges instigate responses, which, of course, can either be appropriate or misleading. Depending on the nature of the response, challenges can lead to negative or even catastrophic consequences for the form they are related to. If the response to a challenge is appropriate and well

5 See Marlene Wind, *Europe Towards a Post-Hobbesian Order?: A Constructivist Theory of European Integration, or How to Explain European Integration as an Unintended Consequence of Rational State-Action*, Fiesole: European University Institute, 1996.

6 Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *Studies of History: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI*, New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1947:51.

focused, it will reinvigorate and strengthen the form it originates from or affects. Challenge and response are as interwoven as the notions of “to be” and “to become”. Toynbee argued about this relationship in the following words: “In the language of science we may say that the function of the intruding factor is to supply that on which it intrudes with a stimulus of the kind best calculated to evoke the most potently creative variations.”<sup>7</sup> Think about this in light of, for example, the negative referenda on the European constitution in France and in the Netherlands. In the end, they may not be the end of constitution-making, but its beginning with a different outcome. Hardly any other trendy social science theory, I fear, is better equipped to explain the meaning of crises, that is to say the many detours, rough roads and happy endings of European integration over the first fifty years. It simply has been and it remains a path of challenges and responses. In terms of integration theory, this tends to confirm constructivist over essentialist concepts, rational institutionalism over functional determinism.<sup>8</sup> With this paper, I do not want to add another interpretation of integration theory. I simply want to suggest that the meaning of crises in and for European integration has been under-researched and that we benefit from giving more thoughts to the medium- and long-term effects of crises.

We do not know which type of crisis could be of such a fundamental nature that it might cause a terminal destruction of the European integration project. We only know that so far, such a terminal crisis has not occurred. To the contrary, all crises of integration and all crises in integration have strengthened European integration in the end. Obviously, this view can be controversial, depending on the definition of crisis and crises, the relation between integration objectives and crisis interpretations, and between common interests and adaptation crises.

To emphasize the meaning of challenge and response does not mean to say that the rationale of this process – or, to be more correct: of these processes – can be simplified and reduced to one explanatory variable. If this were

7 Ibid.: 63.

8 See Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Social Construction and European Integration”, in: Thomas Christiansen et.al. (ed.), *The Social Construction of Europe*, London: Sage Publications, 2001: 50-64.

the case, we would become submissive to deterministic notions of history that surely run counter to social theory and anthropological evidence. Nevertheless, it is not too far-fetched to conceptualize the history of European integration with the help of the constant variable of a permanent set of responses to contingently changing challenges. These responses are usually executed, of course, by a series of political processes with their genuine strategic and tactical logics. But these processes have always been instrumental and functional reactions to structural challenges for the European integration project. In short: I simply suggest that we add the logic of “challenge and response” and the idea of crises as catalysts for progress to the intellectual navigation system that can help us to comprehensively conceptualize European integration, why it began and how it developed against all odds.<sup>9</sup>

- 9 In his small and concise book *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996:7-33) Martin Dedman describes the three most influential approaches to the theory of European integration, although it remains questionable whether they can really be called “theories” or should rather be referred to as comprehensive assessments of analysis: 1. Functional theory that dominates contemporary Political Science. It assumes that an increase in international cooperation and consequently in integration is the logical precondition for states to enhance their scope of action in the modern state system. The scholarly works of David Mitrany (*A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization*. New York: Russel & Russel, Inc., 1943) and Ernst Haas (*The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958) laid the ground for this most influential integration theory. 2. Ideological approaches refer to the growth and influence of European federalist movements in the interwar period and during World War II. The erudite work of Walter Lipgen’s (*Documents on the History of European Integration*, 2 Volumes, Berlin: New York: de Gruyter, 1985 and 1986) has contributed the best possible insights into their quest for a new normative beginning in building a European order. 3. Historical-systematizing research has focused primarily on the period from the Treaties of Rome until the Treaty of Maastricht. Alan Milward (*The European Rescue of the Nation State*, London: Routledge, 1992) in one of the most influential works of this nature has argued that integration occurs only when it is needed by the states that come together. Andrew Moravcsik (*The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Rome to Maastricht*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1998) has elaborated on the theme that European integration strengthened the European nation-states. Today, the main new focus deals with “Europeanization” and its transforming impact on both integration mechanisms on the EU level and national structures in all possible variants; see

## II.

I turn to my second point. The most serious challenge to advance the notion of European integration stood at the very beginning. The destruction of Europe in two wars, the democratic revitalization of its Western part (West Germany including) with the help of America's policy of enlightened self-interest (Marshall Plan) and continuous strategic presence as a "European power", but, not to forget, also the end of Europe's global colonial power marked the beginning of Europe's second renaissance.<sup>10</sup> As much as the first renaissance can best be understood by Leonardo da Vinci's ambition to build a bridge wherever he saw a river and by Blaise Pascal's fear in face of the dark open sky at night, Europe's second renaissance was driven by hope and fear since its very beginning.

If we were to take the liberty to categorize the first fifty years of European integration according to its most defining periods, we will inevitably stumble into the dialectical nexus of challenge and response, of success through crisis. So far, in my mind, the two main defining periods that constitute and frame European integration as we know it today were related to substantial crises and worries: It is plausible to say that "1957" was the answer to the crisis (and opportunity) associated with "1945". Less consensual is the idea that "2004" gave the structural answers to the opportunity (and crisis) of "1989". Both defining periods were framed by the search for a rationale of European integration. Both periods of European integration were defined by quintessential external pressure, challenge and opportunity affecting the idea and implementation pattern on European integration. Both periods have received very different interpretations as far as their success and effect are concerned.

Maria Green Cowles, et.al. (eds.), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001; Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radealli (eds.), *The Politics of Europeanization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

10 See David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.



Clearly, the Treaties of Rome and the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957 became the definite European responses to the end of World War II and the renaissance of parliamentary democracy in Western Europe after 1945.<sup>11</sup> As for 2004, the beginning unification of Europe through the unprecedented Eastward enlargement of the European Union and the signing of the first ever European Constitution in the same year are still open to final judgment and controversial in meaning and success. But there cannot be too much doubt that both the enlargement and the effort to constitutionalize the European Union must be considered as the honest responses of the EU leadership to the fall of the Iron Curtain and to the quest to combine parliamentary democracy and constitutional authority on the national level with democratic transparency, efficiency and accountability on the EU level. Enlargement and constitution-making were and deserve to be considered the necessary and logical consequence of the revolutionary changes of 1989<sup>12</sup> No matter the still unfinished business of enlargement to Southeastern Europe: 2004 was a pivotal year in the unification of Europe, setting the course that will continue for some time. And no matter the many disputes about the European Constitution and its eventual destiny: The signing of the document in 2004 by 25 European countries and, after all, its ratification, so far, by a majority of EU member states with a majority of Union citizens was a unique and revolutionary expression of the ongoing constitutionalization and politicization of the EU.<sup>13</sup> In a structural sense,

11 See Wilfried Loth, *Der Weg nach Europa: Geschichte der europäischen Integration, 1939-1957*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990.

12 See Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: Sketches and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s*, London: Allen Lane, 2004; Ludger Kühnhardt, *Revolutionszeiten: Das Umbruchjahr 1989 im geschichtlichen Zusammenhang*, Munich: Olzog, 1994.

13 For the text see European Union, *Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2005; see also Günter Bischof/Michael Gehler/Ludger Kühnhardt/ Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Towards a European Constitution: A Historical and Political Comparison with the United States*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2005; Marcus Höreth/Cordula Janowski/Ludger Kühnhardt (eds.), *Die Europäische Verfassung: Analyse und Bewertung ihrer Strukturentscheidungen*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005; Yves Meny, "Making Sense of the EU: The Achievements of the Convention" in: *Journal of Democracy*, 14(2003):57-70.

2004 has become a long and yet unfinished year that will be subject to interesting interpretations of historians once truly completed. As much as 1989 did not begin in 1989, 2004 has not ended in 2004.

Ironically, the rejection of the European Constitution by a majority of voters in France and in the Netherlands in 2005 has triggered the first public constitutional debate in Europe. The referenda in France and in the Netherlands have prolonged 2004, made its outcome more unpredictable and opened a new chapter in the European history of crises. They have also accelerated new dimensions of European integration. For example, more than ever, the idea of a European wide referendum has been discussed across the EU.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, this issue has become more important than the original matter of the constitution. It can therefore not be excluded that the ratification crisis of the European Constitution might finally strengthen the European public sphere more than constructivist efforts to initiate a European demos under “good weather conditions”.<sup>15</sup> Should such a development become a lasting reality, we would certainly have to talk about a new application of the law of unintended consequences. For the time being, some scholars do already diagnose an emerging European constitutionalism without a Constitution.<sup>16</sup> The outcome of the ratification crisis is unclear at

14 See Simon Hug, *Voices of Europe: Citizens, Referendums and European Integration*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002; Frédéric Esposito, “The European Referendum: A Tool to Legitimate the European Integration Process?” in: Stuart Nagel (ed.), *Policymaking and Democracy: A Multinational Anthology*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003: 15-37.

15 See Lars-Erik Cederman, *Nationalism and Bounded Integration: What it Would Take to Construct a European Demos*, Fiesole: European University Institute, 2000.

16 See Thomas Banchoff, and Mitchell P. Smith (eds), *Legitimacy and the European Union: The Contested Polity*, London/New York: Routledge, 1999; Berggren, Niclas, and Nils Karlson, “Constitutionalism, Division of Power and Transaction Costs,” in: *Public Choice*, 117.1/2 (2003): 99-124; Michiel Brand, *Affirming and Refining European Constitutionalism: Towards the Establishment of the First Constitution for the European Union*, Fiesole: European University Institute, 2004; Frankenberg, Günter, “The Return of the Contract: Problems and Pitfalls of European Constitutionalism”, in: *European Law Journal* 6.3 (2000): 257-276; Gerstenberg, Oliver, “Expanding the Constitution Beyond the Court: The Case of Euro-Constitutionalism”, in: *European Law Journal* 8.1 (2002): 172-194; Ingolf Pernice, “Multi-Level Constitutionalism in the European Union”, in: *European Law Journal* 27.1/6(2002): 511-529.

this point. It is therefore wise to be on the safe side and argue with caution. But even then I may provoke by proposing that with hindsight knowledge we might one day come to accept the idea that, when all chips are down, the original founding of integrated Europe in 1957 was followed by a second founding associated with the two big projects of 2004.

In any case, the two critical periods of European integration between 1945 and 1957 and between 1989 and 2004 (for the time being, more appropriate it is to say: 2004+?) cover and frame complex historical developments. If we look at these two defining periods in more detail, we will quickly agree that there has never been a linear connection between the intended beginning of each of the processes and its ultimate set of outcomes. There has also never been definite clarity about the beginning and the end of a certain year as far as its political role and ramification were concerned. This, by the way, I should immediately add, was also true for most other minor or major periods and crises of European integration during the past five decades. The outcome of defining periods of European integration was similar to the outcome of many of the other important or less important interim crises of European integration. Most of them have always been resolved, so it seems, by a dialectical combination – at times with longer or shorter detours – of seemingly mutually exclusive trends. And the outcome of integration crises, one might be surprised to realize, has time and again strengthened the rationale for integration and the form it has achieved. Is it really too far fetched to argue that in the end crises have always been Europe's best and most reliable allies?

This brings me to my third point. While the original creation of the Rome Treaties developed from European Economic Community into European Community and ultimately into European Union, it might be a comforting thought to conclude that all concurrent crises after 1957 were possible only because the original crisis post-1945 had been resolved the way it had: To resist Soviet expansion, and to do so under the security umbrella provided by the United States through NATO, had been the most daunting test of Europe's resilience and its ability to reinvent itself after 1945, the incarnation of Europe's self-destruction. Neither 1957 nor any other year ever since constituted the end of European history or, in fact, of integration cri-

ses. To the contrary, the most serious among these crises marked the most relevant turning points in European integration history over the past five decades. One might say: There has never been more European integration history than in the context or aftermath of crises to an original proposal. Here are some of the most obvious examples underlining my thesis:

- The crisis that broke out after the French National Assembly refused to ratify the European Defense Community in 1954 that France itself had launched two years earlier. Its ultimate solution was the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957.
- The failure to proceed with concepts of political integration after the governments of the six member states refused the proposals for political integration expressed in two Fouchet plans in 1961 and 1962 that they had commissioned themselves. Its ultimate answer was a set of treaty revisions during the 1980s and 1990s establishing a pre-constitution for the EU.
- The Luxemburg compromise which brought France back into the EEC institutions in 1965 after la grande nation had left the EEC tables over disputes on agricultural policies that had been initiated by France itself. Its ultimate effect, as slow as it turned out to be, was the gradual recognition of majority voting and the primacy of EU law even by the most rigid proponents of national sovereignty.
- The failure of the EEC to immediately implement the “Werner Plan” of 1970 that outlined the paths towards monetary union and a common currency over the decade of the 1970s. It took new currency crises during the 1980s and 1990s to achieve the introduction of the EURO as ultimate response to the challenges outlined by Werner.
- The refusal of the Maastricht Treaty by the majority of Danes in a referendum in 1992 was considered to be the end to all hopes of a political union. The ultimate solution to this crisis was the pragmatic “invention” of dubious “opting out-clauses” for Denmark that helped to bring the majority of Danes back on the path of integration by way of sending them to the voting booth a second time.

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- The crisis over constitution-making that was brought about by the EU Heads of States and Governments in December 2003 when they were unable to find agreement on the draft Constitutional Treaty, which the Constitutional Convention had presented to them in June 2003. The ultimate response to this crisis came in mid-2004 after postponing the decision for half a year. These six months were used to invent face-saving compromises, although they were not more uplifting than any compromise could have been already half a year earlier. In the end, this was also the result of the controversial budget negotiations in 2005/2006, ultimately a mere hiccup in light of the overall integration history.
- Finally, the ratification crisis of the European constitution. The ultimate answer to this crisis will probably only come about if the EU will again be defined from its opportunities and not only from its limits as has been the case so often during the last years. With or without a constitution, it should not be implausible that in the end the EU might get out of this crisis with a new sense of direction and a strengthened European public sphere.

Whenever there is a light at the end of a tunnel, we can be certain that somebody in the European Union will prolong the tunnel. Nevertheless, the tunnel is built and we all as EU citizens, or at least our political elites, drive through it, often better guided by the lights we have already passed than by new visions or convincing leadership and yet confident that the way out is as solid as the hope that brought us into the tunnel in the first place. The rationale of “*la longue durée*” of the European integration process remains valid, after all: Building a Europe whole and free, based on democratic principles, defending human rights, supporting a market economy with strong elements of welfare state solidarity, gradually combining economic with political union and reconstructing global responsibility and respect for multilateralism in international politics with the United States as Europe’s most indispensable partner. In short: Contributing to a free world in which the European Union (like democracy), as Timothy Garton Ash has re-

minded us, “is not an end in itself. It is a means to higher ends.”<sup>17</sup> In another sequence of his great, uncompromising and thoughtful new book “Free World” he explained the gist of Europe’s experience with freedom and the obligation emanating from it: “This enlargement of freedom is the great success story of Europe over the sixty years since the Second World War. It also provides a central purpose for the next twenty years.”<sup>18</sup> The same holds true for European integration. The only question I would add: Why only for the next twenty years, which coincides with our personal retirement, but not with the life expectancy of our children?

### **III.**

It is interesting to note – to add my fourth thought – that the most important crises and turning points in European integration have been linked, one way or the other, to fundamental developments and adaptation crises in transatlantic relations. At first, the period from 1949 (the founding of NATO) until 1957 (the signing of the Rome Treaties) was crucial to create what we have learned to call “the West”. Then and still ongoing, the second turning times of European integration between 1989 and the long and (in 2006) continuing year 2004 have been intrinsically linked to important transformations in transatlantic relations. It would be a simplification to believe that the first defining period in building a common Atlantic civilization was one of pure harmony, while the second defining period will go into history merely as one of transatlantic divorce. From the Berlin blockade to the Suez crisis, the transatlantic record of the 1940s and 1950s has been mixed. So was the record during the period marked by the outbreak of four Wars of Yugoslavian Succession, two Iraq wars and, after all, the unique enlargement of NATO and efforts to define the transformation of the Greater Middle East as the new transatlantic project.<sup>19</sup> In 2006, the

17 Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World: Why a Crisis of the West Reveals the Opportunity of Our Time*, London: Allen Lane, 2004: 246.

18 *Ibid.*: 210.

19 See Ronald D. Asmus, Ronald D., and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The New Transatlantic Project”, in: *Policy Review*, 115 (2002):3-18; Charles Grant, *Transatlantic Rifts. How to Bring the Two Sides Together*, London: Centre for European Reform, 2003.

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transatlantic partners are still in the midst of finding a new frame of mind that defines their future partnership in the management of global affairs. But in most places it has become evident that whenever transatlantic relations are in bad shape, also European integration suffers.

The most important adaptation crises in transatlantic relations were interwoven with the most important adaptation crises and defining periods in European integration. The time span 1945 to 1957 and the time span 1989 to 2004 (and, to be more precise: 2004+) have been as critical for transatlantic relations as they were for European integration.

Between 1949 and 1957 three complex adaptation crises amalgamated, before they finally defined both the new European and the new transatlantic architecture:

- The Cold War and Soviet expansionism - followed by the wars in Korea and Indochina as well as the Suez Crises that made France and Great Britain painfully realize the limits of their global role - facilitated the American guarantee for Europe's security.
- Functional European integration through the Community of Coal and Steel turned out to be the highly successful way of matching a host of conflicting integration ideas and national interests of rebuilding Western Europe as a society of affluence and freedom, based on a law-based Single Market.
- NATO as the strategic and military insurance policy for rebuilding Western Europe, the Council of Europe as a loose community of European values and the European Economic Community as the first step to political integration in Europe mutually reinforced a new and sustainable European peace order.

Between 1989 and 2004 again three decisive and interconnected adaptation crises shaped the future path of European integration and of the Atlantic community, although we are not yet certain about all components of the outcome, because, structurally speaking, "2004" continues as an overly long year in 2006 and most likely beyond:

- The introduction of the EURO opened the perspective of currency parity between EURO and dollar. The underlying recognition of more or less economic parity between the US and the EU has been evident, for example, throughout trade negotiations in recent years, although the statistics of unemployment, growth and productivity still speak a different language.
- In spite of serious doubts and premature obituaries, the Euro-Atlantic institutions with 26 NATO members and 25 EU members, both anticipating further enlargements, have not lost their role in the projection of stability beyond the Atlantic area. Their role remains unique in a world facing enormous opportunities as a result of globalization, but also serious new threats emanating from failed states, natural and man-made disasters, the modernization crisis of the Greater Middle East, the terrorist threat of Islamic totalitarianism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- The “Internal Cold War of the West” over Iraq between 2002 and 2004 was more troublesome than the fallout of the four Wars of Yugoslavian Succession and differences about Russia’s political system and Russia’s role in the Caucasus.<sup>20</sup> But ultimately, the transatlantic partners had to recognize their mutual dependency. In 2006, the conflict over Iran’s nuclear ambitions seems to support this healing process that has been well under way since 2004, an unfinished year also for transatlantic relations.

I do not want to overstretch the exercise of conceptualizing time-lines and analogies. Some will be debatable or could even be implausible. Surely, it did not take my arguments to raise awareness for the link between defining periods in European and transatlantic adaptation crises. But defining periods they were, after all, because challenges were ultimately transformed into opportunities – or are still in the process of being transformed. This insight would certainly not come as a surprise to a Chinese. In their language, so I understand, they use the same characters for crisis and opportunity (wei ji).

20 See Philip H. Gordon/Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe and the War in Iraq*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.



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